



## "DEAR CHURCH", PART 8 LAODICEA - THE BEST IS YET TO COME

September 8, 2019  
Pastor Alex Lessler

### BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

*"Rebuke is an act of love. And repentance isn't just about stopping bad behavior. It's more about turning to Jesus, looking at Him, and following Him."*

–Pastor Alex

### MAIN TEXTS:

*"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*

*These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.*

*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*

*To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Revelation 3:14-22)*

### SUMMARY

Here, the normal flow of the letters is disrupted, as Laodicea receives no commendation. This church is deeply flawed, but Jesus is still committed to it. We look for direction, guidance, and trustworthiness from powerful people. Jesus is claiming you will never be disappointed in him.

Laodicea was in the Phrygian District of Asia Minor. They had a booming economy and were the banking center of the region. They were known for black purple wool textiles and a unique "Phrygian" eye-salve. Christians in Phrygia were likely affluent. In AD 17 an earthquake rocked the region. When Rome offered financial assistance to rebuild, Laodicea refused Rome's help. Laodicea had an attitude of self-sufficiency.

Laodicea was on the crossroads of trade routes which made it prosper, but one of its weaknesses was that it had no source of freshwater. So they built aqueducts to get water from neighboring cities. From Laodicea you could see hot springs which were useful for medicinal purposes. In the distance a mountain range provided cold refreshing water. However, the hot water cooled off on its way to Laodicea was mineral dense, making it no good for cooking or drinking, it stank, and calcified the pipes; its only use was to drink it to make you vomit if you were sick. The cold water warmed up as it traveled through the aqueducts, and collected "stuff" in route, making it no good for drinking. "Lukewarm" described the condition of the water when it reached the city. This isn't about spiritual fervor, but reflected that the church in Laodicea was neither healing of the spiritually sick (hot), nor refreshing for the spiritual weary (cold.) The church was ineffective. Faithfulness and obedience to Jesus results in a people who love one another, and love their city well. The church of Laodicea had no impact on the city around them. People were materially wealthy, but spiritually bankrupt.

Jesus (in contrast to the trade city of Laodicea) offers what money can't buy. The gold refined in the fire stands in contrast to the banking center; this describes the crucible that purifies and shapes our character. Jesus wants you to come to him. Affluence can create the illusion of being about to avoid pain. Instead, Jesus offers a means by which pain can produce character. Jesus offers white clothes; this is in contrast to the Laodicea purple wool which represented opulence and affluence of this world. The white baptismal robes signify our new life in Christ, and the holiness given to us by Jesus. Lastly, he offers a different kind of eye-salve. Jesus offers a solution to their spiritual blindness. He wants them to see the world and people as he does.

Rebuke is an act of love. When Alex tells his young daughter to stop at the crosswalks and look both ways, he is rebuking her. It wouldn't be a loving thing for a father to just say, "we'll see how this goes; hope she makes it today." Love is "don't you ever do that again," not out of anger, but love and wanting the best. Laodicea is left with a choice: to repent and turn to Jesus, or to dig their heels into the ground.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.*

### LEAN IN

***These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.***

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon?  
Why was it significant to you?
2. What was your high/low for this past week (or since group last met)?  
What was the best thing that happened and the worst thing that happened?
3. Last time we met, we talked about [whatever you talked about]. Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? Has it has an impact on your life in anyway?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week?  
What's one that you are dreading?

### LOOK DOWN

***These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.***

***Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max***

1. What does Jesus emphasize about himself in verse 14? Look also at Isaiah 65:16.  
Why do you think Jesus described himself in these terms? Why do you think Jesus begins the letter with a description of himself and his character?
2. Why is Jesus giving this message to the church of Laodicea?
3. In light of the information Alex gave about the water supply in Laodicea, how should we understand being hot, cold, and lukewarm?
4. Although we usually hear Revelation 3:20 as directed toward unbelievers, the context indicates that this promise is given to Christians. Why is this promise significant?
5. How do you see the concepts of love and discipline connected? (v19)

### LOOK OUT

***These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.***

***Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max***

1. The church in Laodicea offered no hope to a people that desperately needed it.  
But we can learn from them so that we can be prepared and equipped to give reason (testimony) to the hope we profess today. What are ways in which you can offer healing and refreshment to a world in need?
2. Jesus is rebuking the church in Laodicea for being complacent and comfortable with their material possessions and status. In what ways do you struggle with apathy and complacency, or insulating yourself from the pains and inconveniences of life?
3. In v18 Jesus mentions three things the church needs from him: refined gold, white clothes, and salve for their blindness-- the very things that the Laodiceans would have thought they didn't need. What things today give us a false sense of security?  
What might Jesus say we need from him today?
4. Jesus is writing to people who are already Christians, and he's asking them to open the door. When the master of the house went away, it was the responsibility of the steward to open the door to his master and welcome him to his rightful place upon his return. Jesus is the master, but he comes in and offers a meal. He uses his power and position to offer himself in the eucharist (communion). Read vv. 20-21 and share your thoughts.

**DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS,  
CONT.****LOOK IN**

*These are questions that help you consider personal application.*

*Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max*

1. Have you trusted powerful people, or a powerful person, and been let down?  
What does it mean to you that Jesus describes himself the way he does in the introduction to this letter?
2. How does it make you feel that even to a church that thinks they have no need of Jesus, he still calls out, lovingly rebukes them, and offers them what they truly need?
3. Alex asked "if the church was not here, would the city miss you?" Or "if you moved out of the neighborhood, would your neighbors feel the void?"
4. At the beginning of the letter, Jesus identified himself as the Creator. Alex described how his daughter asked him why he doesn't drink coffee out of the Kitchen Aid mixer. Alex didn't invent it, but he knows that the person who did didn't make it so people could drink a gallon of coffee. It was created for another purpose. Jesus knows the purpose for which we were created. Tell about a time where the Jesus rebuked you, calling you to what you were created for.
5. Laodicea was known for banking, purple cloth, and eye-salve. Look at what Jesus says in v17. In what areas of your life are you tempted to think that you are self-reliant and do not need to rely on Jesus? What does this look like in your life?

**LIVE IT OUT**

*These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.*

*Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. Like Laodicea, we are left with a choice: to repent and turn to Jesus, or to dig our heels into the ground. Which will you choose today, and why?  
It's okay. Be honest.

*NOTE: On the following page (for most weeks) you will find a set of sermon notes created by Charissa Burns, an artist who calls B4 home. We include them purely for your enjoyment and encouragement, courtesy of Charissa. You can follow her on the 'Gram @charissaburnsstudio*

# DEAR CHURCH

9-8-2019

BEAVERTON FOURSQUARE CHURCH

The message to the church in Laodicea.  
Rev. 3:14-22

There is no commendation.  
Very clear that this is a  
church of flawed people.

Jesus says if you come to  
me you will be fulfilled,  
satisfied, made new!

↳ all churches are  
filled with flawed  
people, but God is  
flawless.

In this passage, Jesus  
offers more than can  
be bought. Jesus offers  
what the world can't.  
He offers purity,  
healing, refreshment,  
no shame, hope!

Lukewarm = Indifferent

Jesus invites us into the  
life he created you  
for!

Rev. 3:17

"I correct & discipline everyone  
I love. So be diligent and  
turn from your indifference!"  
- correction is loving.  
- repentance is turning  
and running to Jesus.

Some History

Laodicea was a  
wealthy, comfortable  
city. Banking center,  
specialized wool, & a  
healing eye salve. So  
the city was doing well.  
After an earthquake,  
they denied help to  
rebuild from Rome.  
An attitude of "I can  
do it myself, I don't  
need help at all."  
They also had no water  
where the city was. So  
they piped in water from  
mineral rich hot springs  
far away, but by the  
time it got to Laodicea  
the water was lukewarm  
and was only used to ~~it was~~  
cause you to vomit (poison).  
They piped in freshwater that was  
gathered sediment  
and bugs on the way &  
was gross and lukewarm  
as well.

↳ The analogy of  
lukewarm water  
made sense to  
this city. The  
water was not  
healing or refreshing.

↓  
For churches &  
Christians:  
Would we be  
noticed if we  
were gone?

↓  
Was a good  
healing or refreshing  
impression made?

↓  
Lukewarm Christians  
will not leave a good  
mark on the world.  
Jesus is asking for  
us to be who he created  
us to be.

↳ Jesus stands at the door and knocks - He's asking them to open the  
door to the master and give him the rightful place as the head  
of the household. Then share a meal and engage in relationship.

Laodicea's church turned & became a huge testimony to Jesus!